

## Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07  
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15  
USIA-06 IO-13 SSM-03 ORM-02 AID-05 TRSE-00 OMB-01  
CU-02 MCT-01 /083 W  
-----121111Z 050934 /11

R 120918Z MAY 77  
FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3998  
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN  
AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI  
AMEMBASSY CAIRO  
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS  
AMEMBASSY DOHA  
AMEMBASSY JIDDA  
AMEMBASSY SANA  
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV  
USINT BAGHDAD  
AMCONSUL JERUSALEM

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 BEIRUT 2257

E.O. 11652: GDS  
TAGS: PFOR, PINS, LE  
SUBJECT: THE LEBANESE CRISIS: OBSERVATIONS

1. THE FOLLOWING MISCELLANEOUS OBSERVATIONS GIVE SOME  
PERSPECTIVE TO NATURE OF LEBANON PROBLEM.

2. THE LEADERSHIP CRISIS. IN 1958 THE SUNNIS WERE THE  
PRINCIPAL FIGHTERS. THIS TIME THEY SAT OUT THE WAR ON  
SIDELINES WHILE THE MARONITES FOUGHT THE PALESTINIANS.  
THE MARONITE TROOPS WERE LED BY THE SONS OF TRADITIONAL  
LEADERS AND OTHER YOUNG PROFESSIONAL PROPLE, AND  
UNIVERSITY STUDENTS OF GOOD FAMILY FOUGHT IN THE RANKS.  
THE EDUCATED SUNNIS STAYED HOME. RESULT: TODAY THE  
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MARONITES HAVE ACTIVE YOUNG LEADERS WITH A LOYAL  
FOLLOWING WHO CAN CLAIM TO SPEAK FOR THEIR PEOPLE.  
THE SUNNIS HAVE NONE EXCEPT A GAGGLE OF FORMER PRIME  
MINISTERS, LARGELY DISCREDITED BY THEIR VACILLATING  
POSITIONS DURING THE FIGHTING. THE MARONITES CLAIM  
THERE IS NO ONE TO NEGOTIATE WITH ON THE OTHER SIDE,  
NO INTERLOCUTEUR VALABLE, AS THE FRENCH LIKE TO SAY.

(KAMAL SALIBI ARGUES THAT THE MARONITES AND DRUZE, INFECTED WITH TRIBAL SOLIDARITY, OR 'ASABIYA, HAVE ALWAYS HAD LEADERS, WHEREAS THE DETRIBALIZED URBAN SUNNIS NEVER HAVE, AND THAT THIS HAS BEEN A CONSTANT FACTOR IN THE MARONITE DOMINANCE OF LEBANON.)

3. THE QUARREL. THE POLITICAL PROBLEM TODAY IS A TWO-PRONGED QUARREL--MARONITE AGAINST SUNNI, AND MARONITE AGAINST PALESTINIAN. THE DRUZE AND ORTHODOX ARE INTERESTED IN UNITY AND CONCILIATION, BUT THEY HAVE LITTLE INFLUENCE, PARTICULARLY IN THE ABSENCE OF KAMAL JUNBLAT. (IT IS NOTEWORTHY THAT THE LARGEST RELIGIOUS GROUP IN LEBANON TODAY, THE SHIA, HAVE SO FAR PLAYED A VERY LIMITED ROLE. IN THE UNLIKELY EVENT THEY ASSUMED THE POLITICAL POSITION TO WHICH THEIR NUMBERS ENTITLE THEM, THE PICTURE WOULD CHANGE VERY SUBSTANTIALLY.) WERE THE MARONITES AND SUNNIS TO MAKE COMMON CAUSE AGAINST THE PALESTINIANS, THE LEBANESE ASPECT OF THE QUARREL WOULD BE SOLVED--BUT THE PALESTINE ASPECT WOULD REMAIN. THE LATTER IS NOT FULLY SOLUBLE IN THE STRICTLY LEBANESE CONTEXT, BUT PERHAPS IT COULD BE COOLED DOWN.

4. CHRISTIAN ECONOMIC DOMINANCE. IT IS COMMON TO THINK OF THE COMMERCIAL COMINANCE OF THE CHRISTIANS AS DUE TO FRENCH PATRONAGE. IN FACT, AS FAR BACK AS 1848, OF THE 29 PRINCIPAL MERCHANTS OF BEIRUT, 26 WERE CHRISTIAN AND ONLY 3 WERE MOSLEM. (SEE ARTICLE BY CHARLES ISSAWI IN MESA JOURNAL FOR JANUARY 1977.) THIS  
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ECONOMIC SUPERIORITY HAS CONTINUED TO THE PRESENT, WITH THE CULTURAL AND EDUCATIONAL DIFFERENCES IMPLIED THEREBY INCREASING WITH EACH PASSING YEAR. THIS IS A RECURRENT SUNNI COMPLAINT. IT ALSO EXPLAINS IN PART THE MARONITE CONTEMPT FOR THE SUNNI TODAY. THE FORMER CONTINUALLY VAUNT THEIR CULTURAL SUPERIORITY.

5. EDUCATION--SEPARATE, NOT EQUAL. A RECURRENT MARONITE THEME IS THE NEED FOR SEPARATE EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS SO THE MARONITES CAN STUDY VOLTAIRE AND RACINE INSTEAD OF IBN BATTUTA AND IBN KHALDUN. THUS, PRESSURES FOR THE AUB TO MAINTAIN A SEPARATE CAMPUS IN EAST BEIRUT ARE STRONG. THIS ISSUE IS GOING TO BE ONE OF THE MOST CONTENTIOUS IF DECENTRALIZATION EVER BECOMES INSTITUTIONALIZED.

6. PARTITION IS REAL. ALTHOUGH THE GOL CONTINUES TO SLICE AWAY AT THE AMPLE RUMP OF THE MARONITE ENCLAVE, E.G. REQUIRING THE PERSONNEL OF RADIO AMCHIT

(THE PHALANGE STATION) TO RETURN TO BEIRUT OR FACE  
DISMISSAL, LEBANON IS PARTITIONED DE FACTO INTO AREAS  
WHERE PEOPLE OF THE "WRONG" FAITH ARE NOT WELCOME.  
BEIRUT IS STILL A DIVIDED CITY AND MANY PEOPLE ARE AFRAID  
TO CROSS THE FORMER CONFRONTATION LINE DOWN ITS CENTER,  
PARTICULARLY AT NIGHT. THE CHRISTIAN MERCHANTS OF  
DOWNTOWN BEIRUT HAVE MOSTLY MOVED TO THE ANTELIA-  
JOUNIEH SECTOR OR ASHRAFIYYAH. IT IS MOOT WHETHER  
THEY WILL EVER RETURN TO THE CENTER OF TOWN, EVEN  
WHEN IT IS REBUILT. THE MARONITES ARE QUIETLY WORKING  
AWAY AT COMPLETION OF THEIR OWN AIRPORT AND AT  
MAINTENANCE OF A SEPARATE MILITARY FORCE, AND,  
ACCORDING TO THEIR OWN STATEMENTS, REINFORCING  
THEIR "PARALLEL GOVERNMENT." (GHASSAN TUEINI  
ARGUES THAT THE OLD UNITARY STATE OF LEBANON WAS  
A MYTH AND THAT THE COUNTRY HAS ALWAYS BEEN  
DIVIDED INTO FEUDAL DOMAINS. HE MAINTAINS THAT THE  
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PARTITION WHICH EXISTS TODAY IS SIMPLY RECOGNITION  
OF A FACT LONG SINCE ESTABLISHED. HE MAY BE RIGHT,  
BUT IT ISN'T VERY HELPFUL.)

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R 120918Z MAY 77

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 BEIRUT 2257

7. ARMS FOR THE LOVE OF ALLAH. ARMED CIVILIANS ON THE STREETS TODAY ARE A RARITY. CHAMOUN'S BODYGUARD AND MINE ARE PERHAPS THE TWO LARGEST PRIVATE ARMIES STILL PUBLIC. THE QUANTITY OF ARMS HELD BY PRIVATE INDIVIDUALS, HOWEVER, MUST BE CONSIDERABLE, WHILE THOSE HELD BY CHRISTIAN MILITIAS AND PALESTINIANS IN PARTICULAR ARE AWESOME. TWENTY-FIVE YEARS AGO IT WAS ENOUGH FOR A TANK TO APPEAR ON THE STREET TO COW EVERYONE. TODAY IN TARIQ AL JADIDAH THE SYRIAN TANK DRIVER IS LUCKY IF HE DOES NOT GET KNOCKED OUT WITH AN ANTI-TANK GRENADE. IN 1954, THE HAPPY HASHEMITES THREW ROCKS AT THE BRITISH. TODAY THE GUERRILLAS FIGHT WITH 155MM HOWITZERS.

8. TERRORIST PRESENCE. ALL THE CHRISTIANS AND  
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SOME MOSLEMS CHEERED WHEN FAROUK ABI LAMA, THE MILD-MANNERED NEW DG OF SECURITY, WENT OUT AND STOPPED 27 PALESTINIANS FROM ENTERING LEBANON. HE CLAIMS THEY WERE TERRORISTS. MAYBE THEY WERE, BUT 27 MORE WOULD NOT HAVE MADE MUCH DIFFERENCE. THE PLACE IS FULL OF TERRORISTS OF ALL DESCRIPTIONS, MOST OF THEM TRAVELING ON FALSE PASSPORTS PROVIDED BY OBLIGING ARAB GOVERNMENTS. THEY ENTER AND LEAVE LEBANON AT WILL. (IF EVER WE ARE TO BRING TERRORISM UNDER CONTROL, SOMETHING SERIOUS WILL HAVE TO BE DONE ABOUT THE TRADE IN FALSE, FRAUDULENT AND STOLEN PASSPORTS.) LEBANON WILL NOT BE SAFE UNTIL IT CAN STOP THIS TRAFFIC.

9. HYPOCRISY. THE GREASE WHICH HAS MADE OPERATION OF CREAKY LEBANESE SYSTEM POSSIBLE HAS BEEN THE GENIAL HYPOCRISY WITH WHICH EVERYONE ACCEPTED, OR PRETENDED TO ACCEPT, CERTAIN MYTHS, MOST IMPORTANT OF WHICH WAS THAT CONFESSIONAL PROBLEMS WERE POLITICAL, NOT SECTARIAN. THIS WAS MORE IMPORTANT TO THE MOSLEMS THAN THE OTHERS AND IS STILL BELIEVED BY MANY OF THEM. JUST THE OTHER DAY, FOR INSTANCE, THE TUNISIAN AMBASSADOR TOLD ME SOLEMNLY THAT PROBLEM WAS NOT RELIGIOUS. IN FACT IT IS RELIGIOUS, AND SECTARIAN TENSION IS TOO DEEP TO BE ERADICATED. IN ANY PERIOD OF TIME RELEVANT TO CURRENT CRISIS. CHRISTIAN LEADERS CLAIM THEY DO NOT TRUST THE MOSLEMS BECAUSE THEY

DID NOT BEHAVE AS "LEBANESE" DURING THE FIGHTING, BUT BENEATH THIS POLITICAL ARGUMENT IS A DEEP RELIGIOUS ANIMOSITY. WITH LUCK, ANOTHER PATCHWORK JOB WILL PERMIT THE STATE TO FUNCTION AGAIN, BUT BASIC ANTAGONISMS ARE NOT GOING TO BE ELIMINATED IN THIS GENERATION. ONE HOPEFUL SIGN, HOWEVER, IS THAT AT LEAST PEOPLE ARE NOW SAYING MORE OPENLY WHAT THEY HAVE ALWAYS FELT. PERHAPS THIS WILL EVENTUALLY LEAD TO GREATER UNDERSTANDING, ALTHOUGH TO DATE IT HAS  
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ONLY SUCCEEDED IN CONFIRMING PEOPLE IN THEIR EXTREMISM.

10. CONCLUSION: WE HAVE A LONG WAY TO GO BEFORE LEBANON WILL APPROACH NATIONAL CONCILIATION. THERE ARE SOME STIRRINGS (BACHIR GEMAYEL HAS JUST MADE A POSITIVE STATEMENT ABOUT DIALOGUE, FOR INSTANCE), AND MIRACLES CANNOT BE EXCLUDED, BUT IT WILL TAKE MORE SENSE OF NATIONAL RESPONSIBILITY THAN MOST TRADITIONAL LEADERS HAVE SHOWN TO DATE, OR IT WILL TAKE A GENERATION OF LEADERS WITH A NEW APPROACH. UNFORTUNATELY THE FIGHTING OF THE LAST TWO YEARS HAS STRENGTHENED POSITION OF YOUNG CHRISTIAN LEADERS WHO APPEAR TO BE AT LEAST AS SECTARIAN AND DOGMATIC AS THEIR FATHERS.  
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**Disposition Approved on Date:**  
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